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United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004)

Note by the Secretary-General**

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), submitted in accordance with Assembly resolution 56/167 of 19 December 2001.

* A/57/150.

** The present report was submitted on 16 August 2002 so as to include as much updated information as possible.

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Summary

In its resolution 57/167 entitled "United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education", the General Assembly requested the High Commissioner to bring the resolution to the attention of all members of the international community and of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with human rights education and public information, and to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session on the progress made towards the achievement of the objectives of the Decade.

Accordingly, the present report includes communications received by those actors and other information on human rights education activities undertaken by the Office of the High Commissioner between December 2001 and early July 2002. Earlier activities are highlighted in the report to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-eighth session entitled "Promotion and protection of human rights: information and education" (E/CN.4/2002/104).

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I. Implementation of the Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education

1. This section follows the structure of the Plan of Action for the Decade (A/51/506/Add.1, appendix), highlighting the advancements in the implementation of components two, three, four and five.

A. Components two and three: strengthening international and regional programmes and capacities for human rights education

1. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

2. In line with the recommendations of the mid-term evaluation and with relevant General Assembly and Commission on Human Rights resolutions, the contribution of the Office of the High Commissioner to the Decade's objectives has continued to focus on the following courses of action:

(a) Ensuring basic worldwide coordination of the Decade

3. The Office has continued to disseminate information on the Decade and on human rights education in general by answering related inquiries from interested representatives of Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and others. A page concerning the Decade on the Office's web site is periodically updated in order to disseminate related information.

4. In May 2002 notes verbales were addressed to all Governments, as were letters to intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, chairpersons of the treaty bodies and mandate holders of extra-conventional procedures and mechanisms. The correspondence drew their attention to General Assembly resolution 56/167 and to related Commission on Human Rights resolution 2002/74, and solicited information on their contributions to the implementation of the above-mentioned resolutions.

(b) Facilitating networking and information sharing among the Decade's actors

5. The Office has continued to maintain and develop its Database on Human Rights Education, which is available from the Office's web site at http://www.unhchr.ch/hredu.nsf. The database is divided into five sections that are all interlinked:

- General (all database documents shown together);
- Institutions (name, address, contact person, type, etc.);
- Programmes (type, description, target audience, etc.);
- Materials (bibliographic and substantive information);
- Scholarships (funding organization, admission requirements, etc.).

The five sections can be searched by geographical focus, target groups, substantive focus, country or region, type and language. The information contained in the database is accessible in three of the official United Nations languages (English, French and Spanish).

6. The Office has also continued to develop its resource collection on human rights education, a thematic collection with more than 1,500 items for specialized human rights education and training (curricula, children's books, manuals and trainer's guides, related workshop or seminar reports, multimedia, etc.). All those materials are publicly accessible to human rights educators and other interested visitors in the resource collection room, in the ground floor of the Office's Headquarters in Geneva, which is supervised by a specialized documentalist.

7. The Office of the High Commissioner has also organized related regional and subregional activities. The tenth Workshop on Regional Cooperation for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Asian-Pacific Region (Beirut, 4 to 6 March 2002) included a specific component on human rights education (for the report of the Workshop, see E/CN.4/2002/113, annex I). Another activity was the Subregional Workshop for Pacific Island States on Human Rights Education and the Administration of Justice (Nadi, Fiji, 25 to 27 June 2002), which was attended by judges, lawyers, police, prison officers and

other professionals, as well as government officials working in the justice sector and representatives of civil society.

8. In addition, the Office has substantively participated in, and in some cases financially supported, training and educational activities organized by various institutions and organizations at the international level (for example, the International Institute for Human Rights in France; the Canadian Human Rights Foundation; and the Centre international de formation à l'enseignement des droits de l'homme et de la paix in Switzerland) and at the regional level (the Arab Institute for Human Rights in Tunisia).

9. Finally, the Office has continued to assist and support human rights education programmes by all actors through the provision, free of charge, of its publications (see sect. [e] below).

(c) Supporting national capacities for human rights education

10. The Office of the High Commissioner has continued its technical cooperation activities aimed at strengthening national capacities in the field of human rights, including human rights education. Details of those activities are provided in the report of the Secretary-General to the Commission on Human Rights on advisory services and technical cooperation in the field of human rights (E/CN.4/2002/116).

(d) Assisting grass-roots human rights education initiatives

11. The ACT Project (Assisting Communities Together), initiated in 1998 in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, assists organizations and individuals at the local level in carrying out educational activities aimed at strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights in local communities. From 1998 to 2000, 166 projects were supported in 30 countries.

12. In December 2001, the Office of the High Commissioner, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, launched the third phase of the Project, which is currently being implemented in the following countries:

Africa: Burkina Faso, Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Sierra Leone, United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda;

Asia and the Pacific: Afghanistan, Cambodia, Occupied Palestinian Territory (including East Jerusalem), Philippines and Samoa;

Europe: Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Uzbekistan;

Latin America and the Caribbean: Colombia, Haiti and Venezuela.

13. In June 2002, the Office published a brochure presenting the ACT Project and examples of activities supported between 1998 and 2000. The brochure, intended as a promotional and fund-raising tool, will be widely disseminated in the coming months.

14. The application forms, brochure and other details on the ACT Project are available upon request from the Office of the High Commissioner in Geneva and from its field presences in the above-mentioned countries, as well as from concerned United Nations Development Programme country offices.

(e) Developing a selected number of human rights training and educational materials

15. As its contribution to this component, the Office of the High Commissioner is making information about human rights education and training materials developed under the Decade available through its *Database on Human Rights Education* and its resource collection on human rights education (see sect. [b] above).

16. Work has continued on some of the training packages developed within the programme of the Decade, in particular those aimed at judges, prosecutors, lawyers and prison officials. In the development of these materials, the Office works in close cooperation with relevant experts and organizations.

17. The pilot edition of "Human rights and prisons: a manual on human rights training for prison officials" is being disseminated upon request. In addition, "Human rights in the administration of justice: a manual on human rights for judges, prosecutors and lawyers" is

currently being edited; it is expected to be available by October 2002.

18. Also, a revised edition of *ABC — Teaching Human Rights: Practical Activities for Primary and Secondary Schools* is being completed. In March 2002, the Office circulated the draft for final comments from concerned experts; those comments are currently being incorporated in the text, which will then be submitted for editing.

19. The Office of the High Commissioner has continued to publish other human rights materials and to disseminate them among governmental and non-governmental organizations. An updated list of publications is available on the Office web site and from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner in Geneva.

(f) Globally disseminating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

20. The Office has continued updating and revising its *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) Database*, containing more than 320 versions of the Declaration. The database is available from the Office's web site, http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/index.htm.

21. In addition, the Office maintains its worldwide collection of UDHR materials, comprising more than 400 items on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (printed and multimedia materials as well as a broad array of souvenirs). A selection of items from the collection, whose list of contents is available on the above-mentioned web page, is permanently displayed on the ground floor of the Office headquarters in Geneva.

2. United Nations agencies and programmes

22. The **United Nations University** reported that within its Peace and Governance Programme, it continues to focus its research and education activities on human rights. Two research projects have been completed, and their results are ready for publication. The first of these, *The Globalization of Human Rights*, analyses the implementation of civil, political, economic and social rights at the national, regional and international levels. The second, "Refugees and human displacement in contemporary international relations: reconciling State and individual sovereignty", focuses on human rights issues posed by migration and refugee situations. In addition, the annual United Nations University International Courses, which met from 20 May to 28 June 2002, addressed human rights as one of their basic subjects, from the philosophical, legal, historical, political and cultural perspectives.

3. United Nations extra-conventional procedures and mechanisms

23. The **Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the right to food** indicated that his reports included a section on human rights education. He also reported the forthcoming establishment in 2002 of a course in economic, social and cultural rights within the Graduate Institute for Development Studies of the University of Geneva as part of a two-year course of study leading to a diploma in development studies. The Institute's courses are attended mainly by students from developing countries.

4. Non-governmental organizations

24. Several international non-governmental organizations with consultative status with the Economic and Social Council have informed the Office of the High Commissioner of their contribution to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 56/167 and Commission on Human Rights resolution 2002/74. A summary of those efforts is given below.

25. The **National Federation of Youth Organizations in Bangladesh** reported on numerous activities held in commemoration of Global Youth Service Day 2002 in April 2002. The activities included a youth and child rally; a street drama, performed at the Central Shahid Minar in Dhaka; a children's art competition on "service to the community", in which 500 children participated; seminars on health and development issues in schools; and the distribution of leaflets and promotional materials to children.

26. The **Romanian Independent Society of Human Rights** stressed the need to make human rights education sustainable after the end of the Decade. An important actor in this endeavour is the non-governmental sector, which should be supported financially by State policies. The Society indicated that educational and cultural programmes for the prevention and elimination of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia should also include inter-religious programmes to promote tolerance and prevent

extremism. Finally, it also suggested that the International Telecommunication Union and more broadly, information technology, should be fully integrated into human rights awareness-raising campaigns.

27. The **People's Movement for Human Rights Education** (PDHRE) reported on recent developments in the human rights cities programme. The programme, active in six cities around the world and under development in six others, is aimed at bringing together all city actors committed to improving the life of their cities from a human rights perspective; to this end, intensive workshops, train-the-trainer workshops and formal and informal education programmes are being organized. The Movement recently launched the second part of the programme, entitled "Regional and international learning institutions for human rights education". Five institutes have been set up in existing human rights cities, and they are functioning as centres for training community leaders in human rights education.

28. The **International Association for Religious Freedom** (IARF) highlighted the need to include in the Decade's documentation, activities and follow-up the issue of intolerance based on religion and belief as well as the potential usefulness of well-conceived religious education in enhancing tolerance. In this regard, the Association indicated that on the occasion of the International Consultative Conference on School Education in Relation with Freedom of Religion or Belief (Madrid, 2001), it distributed booklets presenting examples of religious educational systems that contribute to the development of human rights values. It also reported on the preparation of a voluntary code of conduct addressing the responsibility of religious education in preventing related intolerance and discrimination. The Association has also recently been organizing bilateral meetings between educators from different religious traditions in order to study methods of developing religious education to enhance mutual understanding and reinforce human rights values.

B. Components four and five: strengthening national and local programmes and capacities for human rights education

29. The Plan of Action for the Decade (A/51/506/Add.1, appendix) provides for the establishment, upon the initiative of Governments or other relevant institutions, of national focal points or committees for human rights education, which should include a broad coalition of governmental and non-governmental actors and be responsible for developing and implementing a comprehensive, effective and sustainable national plan of action for human rights education. When applicable, this plan should constitute an integral part of the national development plan and be complementary to other relevant national plans of action already defined (overall human rights plans or those relating to women, children, minorities, indigenous peoples, etc.). The High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization sent related guidelines (A/52/469/Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1) to all heads of Government in September 1998.

30. Governments sent the following related information to the Office between December 2001 and early July 2002:

(a) **Cuba** reported that the development of responsible citizens respectful of human rights, democracy and peace has been a permanent objective of Cuban educational policy, as part of the realization of the right to education. Specific subjects in the school curricula are aimed at values education, including civic education in secondary schools. The Government of Cuba also stressed the need to educate law enforcement agencies and the judiciary in human rights, and human rights have been integrated into the pre-service training of governmental officials. Cuba further noted the active role played by civil society in human rights education. For example, the National Union of Jurists of Cuba, in cooperation with relevant ministries, regularly organizes human rights workshops for legal professionals; it has also organized human rights seminars for Cuban and Latin-American legal and academic professionals. In January 2002, the Union and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs jointly issued a compilation of human rights instruments that are in force in Cuba, which was disseminated nationwide.

(b) In May 2002, **Peru** adopted Law No. 27741, which establishes a national human rights educational policy. The law provides that human rights education is compulsory at all levels of education, whether civil or military, in Spanish and also in various indigenous languages. The law also requests the executive power to develop a related national plan of action. As a follow-up, all educational establishments, including universities and police and military training institutions, will have six months to revise their curricula in order to comply with the law.

(c) In 2001, **India** developed a national action plan for human rights education that focuses on strategies for human rights awareness-raising and for sensitizing specific target groups (students, officers in the administration of justice, etc.). Civil society is involved in the implementation of human rights education programmes, as well as the National Human Rights Commission. The Government also reported on specific activities undertaken in the secondary and higher education sector, including the establishment of a curriculum revision committee to revise textbooks; the development of a number of training modules for teachers in English, Hindi and local languages by the National Council of Teacher Education; the provision of financial assistance, by the University Grants Commission, to universities and colleges for the development of specific courses in human rights. India further reported on a project to establish a national resource centre at the Indira Gandhi National Open University, which would include human rights materials, with a focus on educational tools.

(d) In **Tunisia**, recent activities in this area include the drafting of a law defining the main role of schools in educating the youth according to universal standards of freedom, democracy, social justice and human rights. Since 1998, the Ministry of Education has been promoting an in-service training programme for teachers that addresses human rights as well as relevant pedagogical approaches. Universities have also been encouraged to introduce programmes addressing human rights issues in various areas, including law, literature and the sciences, and a human rights chair has been established at the faculty of law in Tunis, as well as a chair for the dialogue between civilizations. Tunisia also stressed the role of the media in human rights education, in particular in raising awareness of human rights in the family and of children's rights among children; the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Leisure regularly organizes related radio and TV campaigns. In addition, a number of human rights information centres have been created recently.

II. Conclusions and recommendations

31. The report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the mid-term global evaluation of the progress made towards the achievement of the objectives of the Decade (A/55/360) includes a series of recommendations for action during the Decade's remaining years.

32. It highlights the need for Governments to fulfil the commitments made at the international level to develop national strategies for human rights education which are comprehensive (in terms of outreach), participatory (in terms of involvement of all relevant actors) and effective (in terms of educational methodologies). In this regard, priority should be given to sustainable approaches (i.e., training of trainers; integration of human rights into all relevant training and educational curricula). In addition, given the respective potential and capacities in this field, national strategies should be developed, implemented and evaluated through partnerships within and among actors, both governmental and non-governmental, working in a spirit of mutual respect.

33. Regional and international organizations and institutions should continue to support such national initiatives by facilitating the sharing of information and materials, creating and strengthening of networks, the training of trainers and related activities. In this regard, the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education represents a major opportunity and mobilization mechanism to focus the educational efforts of the international community.